

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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3-26-02

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 13, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF THE FY 2001 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE
ALEXANDRIA PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

ISSUE: Consideration of the FY 2001 Annual Report from the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission (Attachment).

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) receive the Annual Report from the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission; and
- (2) thank the Commission for its efforts on behalf of the City.

DISCUSSION: The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is an eleven-member advisory body created by City Council in March 1970 to study issues relating to park and recreation needs. City Council appoints nine citizens to the Commission from the three planning districts and two high school age members to represent the youth of the City.

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission has prepared a report that highlights the principal activities of the Commission during FY 2001 (July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2001) and the Commission's planned future efforts.

The Commission will continue to monitor park and field maintenance and make recommendations to improve the maintenance of existing recreation facilities, and to properly maintain recreation facilities at Cameron Station, Potomac Yard, and Jones Point Park over the next several years. The Commission will also continue to monitor the City waterfront and make recommendations to maintain and improve this important City resource, especially during the replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. In addition, the Commission will continue to monitor both parent and participant satisfaction with existing recreation programs and make recommendations for changes in current programs and/or the development of new programs. The Commission will continue to make recommendations to improve the diversity in all recreation programs, and to work on issues pertaining to open space, the use of and regulations for City dog parks.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT:

FY 2001 Annual Report for the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission

STAFF:

Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Janet Barnett, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

**ALEXANDRIA PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
2001 ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2000 - JUNE 30, 2001**

Introduction

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is an eleven-member advisory unit established by City Council in March 1970. City Council appoints nine citizens to the Commission from each of the three planning districts. Two high school age members are also appointed by City Council to represent the youth of the City for a total of 11 members.

The purpose of the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is to allow City of Alexandria residents to participate in planning activities, serve as a panel to hear citizen suggestions and/or concerns relating to recreation and park programs, advise City Council on community recreation needs, and assist the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities in its continuing effort to be aware of, and sensitive to public needs.

Fiscal Year 2001 Planning District Representatives:

Planning District I	-	Judy Guse-Noritake, Chair
Planning District I	-	William Conkey
Planning District I	-	Henry Brooks
Planning District II	-	Kirk Fedder
Planning District II	-	Lynette Robinson-Hart
Planning District II	-	Bruce Dwyer
Planning District III	-	Kenneth Foran
Planning District III	-	Ellen Murray
Planning District III	-	Joanne Tomasello
Youth Representative	-	Alex Rubenstein
Youth Representative	-	Allison Swindell (resigned 9 / 1 / 00)
Youth Representative	-	Todd Knisley (appointed 11/28/00)

City Staff

Sandra Whitmore, Director - Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
Janet Barnett, Deputy Director - Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
Kirk Kincannon, Deputy Director - Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

1. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

During Fiscal Year 2001, between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2001, the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission encouraged public participation in the decision making process involving recreational issues by holding public hearings on the following dates:

- Held a Public Hearing for Planning District I on October 19, 2000 to solicit input from citizens from that planning district;
- Held a Public Hearing for Planning District II on November 16, 2000 to solicit input from citizens from that planning district;
- Held a Public Hearing for Planning District III on January 18, 2001 to solicit input from citizens from that planning district;
- Held a Public Hearing at the Durant Recreation Center, at 1605 Cameron Street, on November 7, 2000 to review plans for the renovation of the Durant Recreation Center and solicit input from the public;
- Held Public Hearings on April 16, 2001 at Lee Center, April 23, 2001 at the Mt. Vernon Recreation Center, and May 2, 2001 at the Patrick Henry Recreation Center to discuss the future of the City's open space and to solicit public input on this issue. These sessions provided an opportunity for Alexandria residents to participate in the planning process for an Open Space Study, and culminated with an Open Space Summit that was held at Lee Center on June 23, 2001.
- Held Public Hearings at Lee Center on May 1, 2001 and May 10, 2001 to discuss concepts and designs for Windmill Hill Park.
- Held a Public Hearing on issues relating to, but not limited to, Hispanic residents on May 17, 2001 at the Ramsay Recreation Center. All residents of the City, including the Hispanic Community, were invited to attend this meeting to discuss issues relating to parks and recreation facilities and services in the City.

2. **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- The Commission continued its efforts to evaluate the City's dog exercise areas and fenced dog parks and established guidelines for existing and future sites. The Commission accomplished this work with a Dog Subcommittee that it established in April 1999, and significant input from the public. The Commission developed a Master Plan for Dog Exercise Areas and Fenced Dog Parks that was approved by City Council on September 26, 2000. This Plan addressed issues including the safety of dogs and the general public, the location of dog exercise areas, the balance of park use by dog owners and non-owners, signs, rules and regulations, and funding sources for the construction and maintenance of dog exercise areas and fenced dog parks;

- The Commission reviewed plans for Jones Point Park and the Urban Deck and made recommendations concerning the placement of multi-use playing fields for sports including soccer, hockey, and lacrosse; the design of a multi-use path and bike trails; and other recreation amenities that are planned for this location. In addition, the Commission stressed the importance of retaining the availability of park resources during the construction process, and properly maintaining these new recreation areas when they are completed;
- The Commission made recommendations to the City Manager concerning funding priorities for the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, stressing that the greatest need was for additional funding for park maintenance activities. The Commission highlighted the fact that additional maintenance was needed for existing parks and fields, and pointed out that maintenance demands will increase as new fields are added at Cameron Station, Potomac Yards, and Jones Point Park in the near future. The Commission also highlighted the importance of adequately maintaining the City's waterfront because this is one of its greatest natural resources. \
- As requested by City Council, the Commission reviewed the final design that was created for the Rocky Versace Memorial, a monument that was created to honor Alexandria's Vietnam Veterans. The Commission endorsed the circular plaza design for this memorial which is located at the Mt. Vernon Recreation Center;
- The Commission continued to work with staff to develop and improve recreation programming for teens. These efforts included the continuation of successful programs such as teen programming and activities at community centers and Youth Sports activities for teens, and the development of new programs such as the Chinquapin Teen Nights that have proven very successful. T.C. Williams club presidents were invited to a focus group/pizza party at the Chinquapin Recreation Center to seek their input for future teen programming. In addition, the Commission established a skate park subcommittee that began looking for potential sites for a skate park in the spring with a goal of holding public hearings in the next fiscal year and requesting City funding for this project. The Commission also expanded its teen programming efforts by including one of its members on the City's Youth Policy Commission;
- The Commission's Bicycle Committee continued its efforts to make recommendations to maintain and improve the City's bike trails, and to add new bike trails that will connect the City's parks;
- The Commission worked with staff to determine the best use of \$250,000 in funding that was approved by City Council for additional park maintenance, and this plan was approved by Council on June 26, 2001. The plan provided personnel and equipment that will be used to help meet the current demand for park maintenance operations; and

- The Commission continued its involvement in the planning and design process for Windmill Hill Park to ensure that a public park is created that prominently features the river, enables the public to experience and enjoy the river, retains a reasonable view of the river, and is accessible to all Alexandrians. The Commission solicited public input at meetings that were held on May 1 and May 10, and a City Council work session that was held on June 6, to discuss plans for Windmill Hill Park. On June 26, 2001, City Council adopted a resolution that authorized the City Manager to appoint an eleven member ad hoc steering committee on Windmill Hill Park, including a representative from the Park and Recreation Commission and six citizens at large, two each from the geographic areas of the City delineated by the three Park and Recreation Planning Districts, to work with staff and the design consultant to prepare a design plan for Windmill Hill Park.
- The Commission worked with staff and citizens on the pursuit of public open space, and as indicated, public hearings were held to obtain citizen input. Through the public hearings, the Commission provided an opportunity for all citizens to participate in the planning process for the Open Space Study. The consulting firm of Rhodeside and Harwell, Inc., worked with City staff in pursuit of a formal plan to address the future open space.

3. **FUTURE GOALS**

The Commission will continue to monitor park and field maintenance and make recommendations to improve the maintenance of existing recreation facilities and to properly maintain recreation facilities that are added at Cameron Station, Potomac Yards, and Jones Point Park over the next several years. The Commission will also continue to monitor the City Waterfront and make recommendations to maintain and improve this valuable City resource, especially during the replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. In addition, the Commission will continue to monitor both parent and participant satisfaction with existing recreation programs and make recommendations for changes and the development of new programs. The Commission will continue to make recommendations to improve the diversity in all recreation programs, and to improve the City's teen programming efforts. The Commission will also continue to work on issues pertaining to open space, the use of dog parks, and dog regulations.